

## THE ABA CENTER ON CHILDREN AND THE LAW

The American Bar Association is the largest professional association in the United States, including more than 410,000 attorneys, judges, court administrators and other allied professionals. Since its inception more than one hundred years ago, the ABA has taken an active interest in the improvement of the administration of justice and the judicial process. In the last 25 years, it has focused intensively on the handling of child maltreatment cases by the courts.

The ABA Center on Children and the Law, located in Washington, D.C., provides technical assistance, education, training, and policy analysis regarding the performance of the legal system in the lives of children. A principal mission of the Center is the improvement of court proceedings affecting child abuse and neglect and children in foster care. The Center has played a leading role in the development and continuation of the legislation that created the grants to state courts.

The ABA Center on Children and the Law can provide assistance in the implementation of the grants to state courts in a number of ways. It can assist state courts to develop new policies and rules, draft legislation, implement the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, provide training, and serve as liaison with bar organizations. It can also provide a wide range of technical advice, such as helping to evaluate the progress of court improvement, determining caseload and workload needs, analyzing court staffing requirements, and developing and refining state-specific outcome measures for courts.

The Center can assist courts, attorneys, child welfare agencies, state advocacy organizations, citizen reviewers, legislators, and others in their court improvement efforts. It can help them to: (a) identify and articulate court performance issues; (b) systematically combat delays in achieving permanency for foster children; (c) improve the quality of legal representation; (d) document the financial impact of court practices; (e) identify and provide data to assist with court self-evaluations; (f) develop improved state legislation, court rules, and court forms for child welfare cases; (g) develop recommendations for revised court self-improvement plans; (h) participate effectively in federal Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs); and (i) support the courts' efforts at self-improvement including through legislation.

The Center has played a leading role in court reform in child abuse and neglect and foster care cases. Members of the Center staff have visited every state and are familiar with the variations of state law and practice throughout the country. In addition to numerous legal projects on a wide range of issues related to foster care, the Center has worked with a variety of states on their CFSRs, conducted nationwide studies of judicial involvement in foster care cases; prepared a book of sample court rules for child welfare cases as early as 1984; conducted the first in-depth state and local studies of court performance in child abuse and neglect cases; published books on legal representation; published a book on court-agency relations; and published recent guides for judges on permanency and child health. It has helped plan national and regional court improvement conferences, provided extensive training and technical assistance throughout the United States, and published numerous other papers, manuals, and guides on court improvement.

For further information, contact:

Mimi Laver, (202) 662-1736, [laverm@staff.abanet.org](mailto:laverm@staff.abanet.org)  
Mark Hardin, (202) 662-1750, [markhardin@staff.abanet.org](mailto:markhardin@staff.abanet.org)  
Fax: (202) 662-1755

ABA Center on Children and the Law  
740 15th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005-1022  
<http://www.abanet.org/child/rcj/home.html>